

Ashton

OIL & TRANSPORTATION CO.

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Mr. Robert Redford
% Sanford Productions
TravelLodge Motel #118
60 West 100 North
St. George, Utah 84770

Dear Mr. Redford,

I realize that our conflicting time schedules have made it impossible for us to get together and talk about our various points of view on the future of Provo Canyon. So in hopes that I can show you we are not very far apart, I'm attempting to put on paper all that our Heber Valley group has tried to convey over the past long, long months.

First of all, bear in mind that the loss of the railroad as an entity was a serious economic blow to Heber Valley, both as a tax source and from a business service standpoint, plus the fact that if we were ever able to attract industry to our valley to bolster us, the railroad was an important asset for future development potential. If you combine this thought with the fact that we also felt the highway on all sides of Deer Creek Reservoir was a disaster, from recreational and ecological standpoints, and it would be a duplication of existing highway facilities that could not be eliminated. And a final factor, many of us feel that our long term economic future will be dependent on preserving, as much as possible, all the recreation and environmental potential that Provo Canyon and Deer Creek Reservoir and Heber Valley has to offer, in a total concept.

Realizing that as a potential political force, our tiny community had about as much of a chance as a snowball in hell to get this point across to our State, we decided that we not only had to fight the four lane limited access highway, but that we had to do it on a positive basis, with an alternative solution, and use economic potential as well as preservation to develop statewide support for our plan.

With this thought, it was most fortunate that the railroad group came to us with their proposal that the line be used as a scenic steam railroad, which became our identifiable economic justification we needed so desperately to give the public some visible entity to identify with our overall long term goals.

The results of our first efforts were that on September 22, 1970 the State Road Commission gave the Heber Creeper an opportunity to enter into an agreement to purchase a certain section of right of way in Provo Canyon.

We recognized the inherent problems with private enterprise purchasing this valuable line around Deer Creek and down Provo Canyon, and therefore, in conjunction with the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Utah Travel Council, various State Officials, and Legislative members determined the best possible use for the land in question was under the ownership of the State Park Commission.

At this late date, the Highway Commission has now come forth with their contentions, (a copy of which is enclosed), one of which is that perhaps our concept is unconstitutional. It is extremely difficult for me to believe that the Utah State Department of Highways has the power to question the constitutional rights of the Utah Legislature. If it is against the State Constitution for our Utah Legislature to instruct our Road Department how they are going to build a road, then we have placed ourselves into a pretty narrow box.

In essence, our lobby efforts are trying to convince the legislature to instruct the Highway Department that they can build a new road in Provo Canyon now, but should attempt to utilize, as much as possible, the existing highway right of way and structures, and should avoid destroying or impairing the recreation, ecological or economic features of that canyon, and with full compliance with the Federal regulations. If that means the Highway Department cannot build a 4 lane limited access highway at this time, then so be it. Do the best it can within those guide lines. To protect those recreation and ecological features, the State Park should own the land involved that was purchased from the D. R. G. W. Railroad Company. Surely our legislature has that constitutional right: to give an order to state

departments. Now, that's a lot more blunt than we actually say it, but that's the message we subtly are trying to get across.

It is the Highway Department's duty to build roads, but not interpret our Constitution nor determine our economic future.

As Heber citizens and businessmen, our group feels it is our duty to try to build and protect our economy, particularly as a rural area so desperately needing an infusion of new ideas and venture capital to restructure a drooping economy.

When the responsibility of the Highway Department and their philosophy conflicts with citizens groups over the ultimate prime worth of limited lands, as in the case of a portion of Provo Canyon and Heber Valley, we then ask the Utah Legislature and the Governor to determine whose case is most important, what concept will do the most good for the greatest number of our citizens, and for the greatest number of years.

We also remind our leaders and our citizens, if the future were to prove us wrong, as proponents of the recreational and economic potential of the Canyon and its railroad entity, a 4 lane highway could possibly be built. But, if our concept is not given every positive chance to prove we are right, the opportunity is lost forever, not only to us as investors, but to the State as benefactors of increased economic wealth. We are not asking for financial help, but for an opportunity to try in an environment conducive to success. Our group, regardless of our financial loss will accede to our governments decision, we are asking them to decide now to prevent unnecessary loss to a group of private rural investors who cannot afford to increase their investment under such tenuous circumstances as now surround the venture.

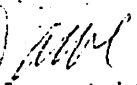
I am convinced that one entity (example: the State Park system) should be responsible for all public lands in Provo Canyon to preserve the land and coordinate the development according to a total plan, or the battle to stop encroachments on the Canyon will be a continuous one.

It is fitting and just for any citizenry to fight for culture and heritage factors such as the Heber and Coalville Tabernacles, and also fight for

ecological and environmental concepts as in your effort in Provo Canyon. But when you can fight for heritage, ecology, environment and economics all at the same time, it becomes more than just a battle, it becomes a way of life, and as such, a cause we cannot afford to lose.

And that, Mr. Redford, is Heber Valley's case as briefly as I can state it. Please forgive the length, but if you understand us, perhaps when we meet again, we can overcome any obstacles that are in our way for a common cause.

Sincerely,



Lowe Ashton

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